



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Immediate Release TO PMs OF THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1943 W

With demands for fresh, frozen, and canned fish increasing sharply in response to war-created needs, the U. S. fishing industry is entering the critical period of the year's operations this month, Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes declared today.

Although fishing continues through-out the year, normally 75 percent of the year's catch is taken in the last six months. The current quarter usually accounts for about 45 percent of the year's total, and the last quarter another 30 percent.

Fisheries for pilchard, salmon, mackerel, and tuna on the Pacific coast, menhaden and New England trawl-caught fish on the Atlantic coast, and shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico all reach their peaks of production during the late summer and fall months. These species usually make up about 65 or 70 percent of the total U.S. production of fish and shellfish.

Prospects are that the fishing industry will equal or surpass last year's production, but will fall far short of meeting the goal of some 6,000,000,000 pounds set by the War Food Administration. Lack of vessels and an inadequate supply of trained manpower and equipment are chiefly responsible, but other factors, such as restrictions on fishing in certain waters are also involved.

With other sources of animal proteins declining, Charles E. Jackson, Assistant Deputy Coordinator, declared that the demands from consumers in the United States for seafoods will probably show a continuing upturn. This demand may be accelerated due to newly established ceiling prices on fresh fish which are in some cases substantially under prices consumers have recently been paying. Suppliers of fresh fish this summer and fall will have to make up for the deficit in frozen fish held in the freezers so far this year. The amount of frozen fish now in storage is little more than half of the normal supply at this time, he pointed out.

Prospects that the Alaska salmon pack will reach the anticipated figure of 5,500,000 cases are good, Mr. Jackson said. The industry is operating this year under a concentration plan administered by the Coordinator's office in order to make the most effective use of available boats, fishermen, and cannery labor. This year salmon is being canned in about 75 of the most efficient plants rather than the usual 120. Operations have been under way since mid-June and will be completed by late September.

(over)

Fishing for pilchards, better known as California sardines, begins August 1 at San Francisco and Monterey and October 1 at San Pedro and San Diego. The industry hopes to take at least a billion pounds of pilchards this season, about a quarter of which will be canned, the balance converted to meal and oil critically needed for animal feeding.

The catch of menhaden, little known to the general public because it is principally used in the manufacture of oil and meal, should reach half a billion pounds, according to the Coordinator's office. Fishing in the principal menhaden waters—Chesapeake Bay and adjacent ocean areas—began about a month ago and most of the catch will be taken by the end of September. Early-season reports to the Coordinator on the catch off the coast of Delaware indicate that the menhaden fleet although operating with fewer boats and men, is catching more fish than last year.

New England vessel fisheries, hard hit this year by the loss of many large trawlers to the Navy, ordinarily deliver the largest landings at Boston, Gloucester and other ports from July to the end of September. Rosefish, haddock, whiting, and flounders make up the bulk of the summer catches. During the first half of the year, New England landings have fallen below last year's level, and unless more vessels are returned it is not expected that the loss can be made up during the balance of the year. Each large trawler represents a potential annual catch of about five million pounds.